

## Ebola Key Messages

**Ebola is a deadly viral disease that is spreading in three West African countries – Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.**

- Although the risk of Ebola spreading in the U.S. is very low, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and its partners, including the Vermont Department of Health, are taking actions to prevent this from happening.
- In Vermont, the Health Department is working with infectious disease experts, hospitals, health care and emergency medical services, and other partners to plan for the possibility of a person with Ebola in Vermont.
- We want to make sure that health care providers are fully informed and prepared to safely identify, isolate, transport and treat any person with Ebola who may present to a health care facility.
- If there is a case of Ebola here, the Health Department will stop the spread of the virus by contacting everyone who had contact with the sick person (contact tracing), and monitoring them for 21 days in case symptoms start.

### **How is Ebola spread?**

You can only get Ebola from touching or having direct contact with –

- Body fluids of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola (blood, vomit, urine, feces, sweat, semen, spit, other fluids).
- Objects (like needles) that have been contaminated by the virus.

Direct contact means that the virus can enter another person's body through broken skin or unprotected mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or mouth.

### **You can't get Ebola from a person who has no symptoms.**

- A person who is infected with Ebola is not contagious until symptoms appear.
- Early in the course of illness there is a small amount of the virus found in the body fluids.
- Over time, as the illness progresses, the amount of virus in the person's bodily fluids increases – and this increases the risk for transmission.

In West Africa, the virus has spread among families and friends because they come in contact with blood or body fluids while living with or taking care of the ill or the dead.

**Ebola does not spread easily like the measles or flu. Ebola does not spread through the air or water, or by food harvested in the U.S.**

- Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.
- If a traveler begins to show symptoms, the Health Department will implement protocols to limit exposure and transport the patient to a designated facility that is prepared to receive Ebola patients.
- For Vermont patients, both Fletcher Allen Health Care and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center are prepared to receive Ebola patients.

**How does active monitoring work?**

- The Health Department will require travelers who are being actively monitored and/or under quarantine to report the following information every day: their temperature and the presence or absence of other Ebola symptoms such as headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite or abnormal bleeding or bruising.
- If a traveler does not report in, the Health Department will take immediate steps to locate the individual to make sure active monitoring continues on a daily basis.

**What is quarantine and when is quarantine needed?**

- Vermont's Health Commissioner has the authority, and is prepared, to issue and enforce a health order to mitigate a significant public health risk. This can include quarantine.
- Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.
- Quarantine, either voluntary or mandatory, may be needed as a precaution for travelers who are returning from three countries in West Africa – Liberia, Sierra Leone or Guinea – and who have had exposure to people sick with Ebola.
- If a person is under quarantine, it means that he or she must stay in their home or at an alternate facility deemed appropriate by the Health Department.
- The person under quarantine cannot have in-person contact or interaction with others (no visitors, no outings), except as authorized by the Health Department.